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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000625

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/21/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: AN MOU, BUT LITTLE REASON FOR OPTIMISM

REF: HARARE 621

Classified By: Charge d'affaires Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) Summary: Significant buzz surrounded the signing of an MOU today in Harare as a framework for negotiations. Previewing the actual negotiations, however, MDC Mutambara (MDC-M) negotiator Welshman Ncube sounded a pessimistic note in a conversation with pol/econ chief on July 18. Echoing MDC Tsvangirai (MDC-T) negotiator Tendai Biti (Reftel), Ncube said the positions of the two parties were extremely polarized. The only possible negotiating outcome, according to Ncube, was a Kenyan-style power-sharing arrangement. While he favored such an outcome, he doubted it would be acceptable to MDC-T, and he acknowledged it might be too ZANU-PF-loaded for international reengagement. End summary.

12. (U) South African president Thabo Mbeki, Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, and MDC presidents Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M) signed an MOU establishing a framework for negotiations today in Harare at the Rainbow Towers Hotel. Mugabe and Tsvangirai, who reportedly had not met since the MDC was formed in 1999, acknowledged each other and briefly shook hands, at the instigation of Mbeki, at the end of a press conference following the signing.

13. (C) Ncube previewed possible negotiation outcome possibilities: 1) Mugabe leaves government and the MDC leads a transitional government based on the March 27 elections. This is the outcome favored by the MDC, but Ncube said the ZANU-PF succession plan is not settled and Mugabe will not leave until it is. There is presently insufficient internal opposition in ZANU-PF to force the issue. 2) Mugabe stays as a ceremonial president and the MDC assumes executive power. Both of these options are unacceptable to ZANU-PF, according to Ncube, because the military, Reserve Bank governor Gideon Gono, and others in ZANU-PF are terrified of surrendering power, and will not willingly let go. 3) A Kenyan-style model where each party has executive power.

¶4. (C) Ncube said he favored the Kenyan model because it provided for a gradual transition to a genuinely democratic government. He suggested it should provide for a five-year transition period so the parties could learn to co-exist and not be preoccupied by preparing for the next election. Ncube said some in MDC-T might accept such an agreement, but he was doubtful that MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai would be amenable. He also opined that it would be anathema to the international community--at least to the U.S. and UK, both of which would be indispensable for rebuilding the economy.

¶5. (C) We asked Ncube whether the MDC, in the process of negotiations, could be swallowed by ZANU-PF as was ZAPU in the 1987 Unity Accord. He argued the situation was not repeatable. In the 1980s, 20,000 to 30,000 people were killed by ZANU-PF and the world turned a blind eye. Now, said Ncube, the situation was much less catastrophic--only about 115 people had been killed--yet the international community was watching and engaged.

¶6. (C) Ncube said that MDC-M would negotiate as an independent party. Given the entrenched positions of the parties, he thought the negotiations would ultimately end in failure. The only recourse for the MDC at that point would be to support reconsideration of sanctions at the UN. He feared that Russia and China would say that the negotiations had failed because the West had imposed an unworkable solution.

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¶7. (C) Tsvangirai had indicated he would not sign the MOU unless there was AU involvement. In South Africa last weekend, an agreement was reached for Jean Ping, chair of the AU commission, Haile Menkarios, UN assistant secretary general for political affairs, and a SADC representative to serve as a "reference group." They will not be co-mediators with Mbeki. We do not expect this to seriously affect the negotiations; the core differences that militate against an acceptable agreement still exist.

¶8. (C) Despite being an MDC member and an ally of Tsvangirai until the MDC split in 2005, Ncube is viewed with suspicion by many in Tsvangirai's faction as being too close to ZANU-PF. Nevertheless, he knows players across the political spectrum, and as one of the negotiators he will have a part in the process.

¶9. (C) We agree with Ncube (whose views track with those of Tendai Biti as reported in Reftel) that ZANU-PF will not willingly give up power and accept a transitional government headed by the MDC. Neither will the MDC accept a government headed by Mugabe. Mbeki, perhaps supported by Ncube, will likely try to steer the negotiations toward a Kenya-style power-sharing agreement. This would be acceptable to ZANU-PF as long as it maintained control of the security structures--military, police, CIO--which are largely running the country at present. In addition to Ncube and others in his faction, there are some in MDC-T who would accept this as the price for achieving peace and what they hope would be a transition to democratic elections in the future. But Tsvangirai and Biti have both said they will not accept it. If they stick to their guns we will be back to square one. If give in, the MDC risks being marginalized by ZANU-PF which, while it might nominally give up control of 50% of government posts, will maintain an iron grip on the security sector and the implementing instruments of civilian administration.  
Dhanani